



The European Landscape Convention The English Heritage Action Plan for Implementation



ENGLISH HERITAGE



defra

Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE





BACKGROUND TO THE ACTION PLAN

The Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (the 'Florence Convention' – the 'ELC') is the first international instrument devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of landscape in its entirety. It was published in 2000 and came into force in England on 1st March 2007.

English Heritage played a significant role in the development, adoption and early implementation of the Convention, both at national and European level. Now, alongside Natural England, English Heritage is a member of the Government's England-wide ELC Implementation Group and of its UK Co-ordination Group.

The English Heritage Action Plan – part of our work for Government under its current programme – is designed to guide our contribution to the further implementation of the Landscape Convention, and to help to ensure that implementation at all levels of government captures the cultural and historical as well as the natural richness of landscape. The aim is to broaden awareness of landscape both within English Heritage and amongst our principal partners in local government.

Landscape policy in the United Kingdom is already closely aligned with the Convention, and before UK ratification a Regulatory Impact Assessment had demonstrated that existing procedures and practice (through the work over many years of government agencies, local government and NGOs such as the National Trust) are compliant with its formal requirements. Government recognises however that implementation can be further strengthened, and this Action Plan sets out ways in which English Heritage will assist government in this task, particularly in recognising the connections between landscape and heritage and in recognising that landscape exists everywhere, in urban and maritime, as well as in rural, contexts.

National implementation of the Convention is led by Defra, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Defra convenes governmental UK and England co-ordination groups, and in England delegates its lead role to Natural England in the context of an overarching strategy – A Framework for Implementation in England – that was drawn up by Natural England and English Heritage. This is designed to frame more detailed action by government departments, agencies local authorities and other non-governmental bodies. In the first instance, Defra asked both English Heritage and Natural England to prepare Action Plans.

THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

The Convention is the first international instrument to deal with the whole landscape, urban as much as rural, ordinary as much as special, marine as well as terrestrial, cultural as well as natural. English Heritage is already the leading actor for some of these aspects, notably but not exclusively in the urban field. The Convention's underlying philosophy, and its democratic approach to both value and change, is attuned to the "Power of Place" and "Force for our Future" agenda, being focused on the connections between people and place and on the idea of 'heritage everywhere'. It was taken into account in drawing up the English Heritage Conservation Principles (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.9181>), which are in harmony with its core concepts, and it supports English Heritage's overall philosophy of managing change constructively. It promotes landscape as a cultural issue – a matter of perception, an issue of shared common heritage, a 'window' through which people view their world – to be used to incorporate the historic environment into the future.

The Convention's forward-looking approach is concerned with providing the highest quality landscape for future generations, by protecting special landscapes and by managing and enhancing all landscape everywhere. Its definition and scope encompass everyday and degraded landscape as well as outstanding or special areas. It does not offer an exclusively preservationist agenda, but sees that the essence of landscape is its living, changing character, and that landscape is dynamic both physically and in terms of perceptions and opinions. It is spatial planning, place-making and agricultural policy that are likely to be primary delivery mechanisms.

ENGLISH HERITAGE AND THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

English Heritage already carries out a great deal of landscape work across the full spectrum of its activities, from strategy, policy, research and communications to planning, advisory and case work. The Landscape Convention provides us with a new opportunity to coordinate existing work, to present it more coherently and to new audiences and to develop new areas of activity. It will help to align our work more strongly with the work of other government and public bodies and to engage with wider policy areas issues, notably within Culture, Communities and Local Government and Defra agendas. We believe that the Convention offers a mechanism for delivering broad programmes designed to harness the historic environment to social and economic purpose (quality of life and quality of place for everyone) as well as supporting the sustainable management of the historic landscape as a goal in its own right.

Our Action Plan proposes ten broad areas for action over the next 5 years. Through its close correlation with our current Strategic Aims, we see the ELC as offering important opportunities to meet DCMS and English Heritage objectives. For example:

- We will use landscape as a forum for contributing to the management of change everywhere and for helping to shape future places. It gives us the opportunity to treat heritage as more than just the designated highlights but as the full context of peoples' lives, thus expanding our engagement with new, broader and more diverse audiences.
- We will continue to work to strengthen the understanding, management and enhancement of the historic environment, notably through national programmes of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and the National Mapping Programme (NMP), and through other strategic programmes of research and investigation. In partnership with National Parks and AONBs we will in particular use the Convention to ensure that future 'high quality landscape' will include a legible past.
- We have particular expertise in urban, built and designed landscapes, and will continue to promote their understanding and appreciation, for example through our programme of urban and metropolitan Historic Landscape Characterisation projects, our Historic Area Assessments and our advice to the owners of designed landscapes and parks. We will specifically use the Convention to develop and encourage approaches which promote an integrated understanding of sub-urban, peri-urban and changing rural landscapes.
- We aim to use this Action Plan to promote more recognition of the historic dimension of landscape in the marine zone (for example in new legislation and procedures, and using our existing Historic Seascape work).
- We will use the Convention's approach to landscape as an integrative concept to help to ensure that the historic environment continues to take its place within the wider environmental agenda, and we will define new high level objectives for urban and rural landscape that ensure the adequate recognition of the cultural character of landscape in public policy.
- We will share with others our expertise in landscape (urban and rural, at all levels, from archaeological landscape and architectural area survey to Historic Landscape Characterisation, from landscape management to new design). We will demonstrate the importance of clearly understanding landscape's historic character for delivering informed management and public understanding and enjoyment.



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C South Norfolk; © NMR 23281-23

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THE ENGLISH HERITAGE ACTION PLAN 2008-2013 to support implementation of the European Landscape Convention

A ADHERING TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ELC (ELC ARTICLES 1 – 3)

1. Promote and explain English Heritage's ELC-related work through:
 - a) high-level published statements demonstrating how the Heritage Protection and Conservation Principles match and deliver the aspirations of the ELC as set out in its Preamble.
 - b) a promotional publication aimed at a wide professional and public audience to showcase recent and current English Heritage landscape work and achievements
 - c) the promotion of understanding and use of ELC definitions and scope (Articles 1 and 2) across English Heritage, the heritage sector and English Heritage partners

B MEETING THE ELC'S GENERAL PROVISIONS (ELC ARTICLES 4, 5 AND 6)

2. Be a centre of excellence for the historic dimension of landscape in town and country, and in the marine zone (policy and strategy formulation, research and outreach to monitoring, planning and management). Develop policy, methods and practice to contribute to the understanding, protection, management and planning of landscape, building on our existing leadership in landscape survey, assessment and characterisation, and promote historic landscape in legislation, PPS and the policies of other organisations.

C CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL LANDSCAPE POLICIES (ELC ARTICLES 5 B –D)

3. Establish English Heritage policy position:
 - define and publicise English Heritage's high-level objectives, policies and actions for landscape, including but not restricted to protected areas;
 - produce a landscape agreement with key partners.
4. Investigate ways to facilitate public participation in landscape, within the limits of available financial resources, either directly or through local government partners, and including English Heritage engagement with NGOs, for example representation on groups such as the ICOMOS/IUCN Landscape Group.
5. Encourage the integration of landscape approaches in all areas of government policy by lobbying, persuasion and example.

D IMPLEMENTING SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR HISTORIC ASPECTS OF LANDSCAPE (ELC ARTICLES 6A – D)

6. Awareness-raising – use the ELC as an opportunity and context to expand public initiatives to promote the historic environment at landscape level.
7. Training and education – integrate the ELC concept of landscape into English Heritage training and related initiatives.
8. Identification and assessment of landscape
 - complete and strengthen English Heritage landscape characterisation and related programmes, including integration with other English Heritage landscape-scale research
 - further develop monitoring of the state of the historic environment by developing the Heritage at Risk and other initiatives and integrate their results with wider landscape monitoring such as Countryside Quality Counts.
 - work closely with Natural England to update the national 'Landscape Character Areas'.
9. Investigate how to define Landscape Quality Objectives in terms of their historic value and character.

E EXPANDING OUR INFLUENCE BY WORKING WITH PARTNERS (ELC ARTICLES 3 – 5, 6E, 7 – 9, 11)

10. Aim to deliver the ELC's aspirations for landscape (because it embraces all disciplines and interests) as an integrative force for inter-disciplinary holistic collaboration:
 - work with Defra & Natural England to deliver and monitor the England Implementation Framework and to contribute to UK co-ordination, including support for the UK ELC Landscape Award,
 - collaborate with CLG on spatial planning and landscape, notably in urban and Housing Growth areas
 - develop programmes to facilitate pan-European co-operation, through Council of Europe and EU networks, and in the context of the European Forum of Heritage Directors
 - support capacity building to assist local government contribution to implementation

THE ENGLISH HERITAGE ACTION PLAN FOR THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

The Action Plan takes its place alongside that of Natural England in the context of Defra's Framework for Implementing the Convention in England. It follows the structure of the Convention's Articles but is selective in which aspects will receive priority in these early years to about 2013 or so. Principally, the Plan seeks to capitalise on English Heritage's existing strengths in this field, to reflect our Strategic Aims and to support Defra's aims. The choice of areas for action highlights the distinctive and in some cases unique contributions that English Heritage can make: to understanding (where we already have considerable body of expertise), capacity building and training (especially in the context of the post-HPR situation) and public participation (to build on our expertise in education and inclusion in the light of, for instance, Power of Place).

They are collated under five headings that follow the main Articles of the Convention itself:

- A Adhering to the philosophy of the ELC
- B Meeting the ELC's General Provisions
- C Contributing to national landscape policy
- D Developing specific measures to promote the historic aspects of landscape
- E Working with partners

They are also correlated with English Heritage's Strategic Aims, and of course have a direct relationship to the five targets identified by Defra in its Framework for Implementation in England:

- Improving performance within the current legal and regulatory frame
- Influencing future legislation, regulation and advice
- Improving understanding of landscape character and dynamics, monitoring change and trends
- Engaging people (awareness and understanding activities, promotion, education & training)
- Sharing experiences and best practice.

The European Landscape Convention offers a vision and a strategy for landscape that does not belong only to national government or its agencies. It is addressed also to all levels of government but equally importantly to civil society as a whole.

English Heritage, like Natural England, has prepared its Action Plan to guide its own contribution to implementing the Convention, but we encourage others organisations or groups – non-governmental, professional, business and community-based – to consider preparing strategies or plans for their own activities in this field.



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W Docklands; © Graham Fairclough

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EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Public bodies are legally required to ensure that their plans, policies and activities do not unfairly discriminate against a group protected by equalities legislation. It is the responsibility of those public bodies for whom we provide advice to ensure that they have conducted any relevant Equalities Impact Assessment that may be required when implementing the advice of English Heritage.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit: www.helm.org.uk

www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation

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The full text of the Convention (with its Explanatory Memorandum and Operational Guidelines) can be found on the Council of Europe website at <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/conventions/Landscape>

There is a link from the following web page, which also includes related information:

<http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk>

Published by English Heritage February 2009.

Product Code: 51490

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